a computation circuit for computing an auto-focusing data value in accordance with the at least one first measured distance-value selected by the selection circuit.

2.   A distance-measuring device according to Claim 1, wherein the computation circuit sets the auto-focusing data value to a value equal to a minimum permissible distance value when the computed auto-focusing data value is smaller than the minimum permissible distance value.

3.   A distance-measuring device according to Claim 1, wherein the computation circuit computes the auto-focusing data value from a mean value of the at least one first measured distance-value selected by the selection circuit.

4.   A distance-measuring device according to Claim 1, wherein the computation circuit computes the auto-focusing data value from a majority of the at least one first measured distance-value selected by the selection circuit.

5.   A distance-measuring device according to Claim 1, wherein the predetermined distance value is obtained from a focal distance of a lens used for auto-focusing.

6.   A distance-measuring device according to Claim 1, wherein the predetermined distance value is obtained from an aperture value of a lens used for auto-focusing.

7.   A distance-measuring device according to Claim 1, wherein a smallest measured distance-value serves as the auto-focusing data value when the measured distance-values to the plurality of distance-measured regions are not smaller than the predetermined distance value and are not selected by the selection circuit.

8.   A camera including a distance-measuring device for measuring individual distances to a plurality of distance-measured regions, the camera comprising:

a selection circuit for selecting at least one first measured distance-value by excluding second measured distance-values that are not smaller than a predetermined distance value, from individually measured distance-values to the plurality of distance-measured regions;

a computation circuit for computing an auto-focusing data value in accordance with the at least one first measured distance-value selected by the selection circuit; and

a driving circuit for driving an image-forming lens in accordance with the auto-focusing data value computed by the computation circuit.

9.   A camera according to Claim 8, wherein the computation circuit sets the auto-focusing data value to a value equal to a minimum permissible distance value when the computed auto-focusing data value is smaller than the minimum permissible distance value.

10-14. Cancelled herein.

15.   A method of measuring individual distances to a plurality of distance-measured regions by a distance-measuring device comprising the steps of:

selecting at least one first measured distance-value by excluding second measured distance-values that are not smaller than a predetermined distance value, from individually measured distance-values to the plurality of distance-measured regions; and

computing an auto-focusing data value in accordance with the selected at least one first measured distance-value.

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16. A measuring method according to Claim 15, wherein the computing step includes setting the auto-focusing data value to a value equal to a minimum permissible distance value when the computed auto-focusing data value is smaller than the minimum permissible distance value.

17. A measuring method according to Claim 15, wherein the computing step includes computing the auto-focusing data value from a mean value of the selected at least one first measured distance value.

18. A measuring method according to Claim 15, wherein the computing step includes computing the auto-focusing data value from a majority of the selected at least one first measured distance-value.

19-42. Cancelled herein.

43. In a distance-measuring device for measuring individual distances to a plurality of distance-measured regions, a computer usable medium having computer readable program code units embodied therein comprising:

a first program code unit for selecting at least one first measured distance-value by excluding second measured distance-values that are not smaller than a predetermined distance value, from individually measured distance-values to the plurality of distance-measured regions, and

a second program code unit for computing an auto-focusing data value in accordance with the selected at least one first measured distance-value.

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44.   In a distance-measuring device for measuring individual distances to a plurality of distance-measured regions, a computer usable medium having computer readable program code units embodied therein according to Claim 43, wherein the second program code unit includes a program code unit for setting the auto-focusing data value to a value equal to a minimum permissible distance value when the computed auto-focusing data value is smaller than the minimum permissible distance value.

45-56. Cancelled herein.

Please add new Claims 57-60.

57.   (New) A distance-measuring device for measuring individual distances to a plurality of distance-measured regions, the distance-measuring device comprising:

    a selection circuit for selecting at least one measured distance-value for use in focusing by comparing a first measured distance-value to a predetermined distance value, wherein if said first measured distance-value is not smaller than said predetermined distance value, said selection circuit compares a second measured distance value to said predetermined value and excludes said first measured distance-value; and

    a computation circuit for computing an auto-focusing data value in accordance with the at least one measured distance-value selected by the selection circuit.

58.   (New) A distance-measuring device according to Claim 57, wherein if said second measured distance-value is not smaller than said predetermined value, said selection circuit excludes the second measured distance-value and selects a third measured distance-value.

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59.   (New) A distance-measuring device according to Claim 57, further comprising an ordering circuit for ordering into a predetermined order a plurality of individually measured distance-values and for providing a plurality of ordered-measured-distance-values, wherein said selection circuit selects at least one ordered-measured-distance-value.

60.   (New) A distance-measuring device according to Claim 57, wherein said computation circuit sets the auto-focusing data value to a value equal to a minimum permissible distance value when the computed auto-focusing data value is smaller than the minimum permissible distance value.

REMARKS

Claims 1-9, 15-18, 43-44, and 57-60 are now pending in the present application. Claims 1, 8, 15, 43, and 57 are the independent claims.

Claims 10-14, 19-42, and 45-56 have been cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein and without conceding the propriety of the rejections thereof. Claims 57-60 are newly-presented. Support for newly-presented Claims 57-60 may be found at least, for example, at page 6 and in Figure 2 of the disclosure. No new matter has been added.

Applicant submits that Claims 1, 8, 15 and 43 are allowable for the reasons stated in the January 22, 2002 Response, and that Claim 57 is allowable because the cited art does not teach or suggest a selection circuit as recited in Claim 57. The dependent claims are allowable by virtue of their dependence from Claims 1, 8, 15, 43 and 57 and the additional features each recites. Favorable consideration and an early allowance are respectfully solicited.